

18/11/2020

Prime Minister Boris Johnson,
10 Downing St,
Westminster,
London SW1A 2AA

Dear PM Boris Johnson,

We are pleased to see that you have announced a new 10 point green plan, and welcome the creation of 250,000 green jobs. However, we feel that a key aspect of the UK's journey to net-zero has been omitted from this plan: education.

The education sector threads together other key sectors so in order to realise any green recovery plan education needs to be fully integrated into our industrial strategy. The Aldersgate Group's recent report: *Upskilling the UK workforce for the 21st-century* shows that there is a severe skills deficit in the UK which must be urgently tackled if we are to achieve net-zero. In fact, they found that 91% of businesses face a skills deficit. Fortunately, we have worked to find solutions to this challenge, and urge you to implement these changes ahead of COP26 to demonstrate the scale of the UK's ambition on climate action.

Firstly, the government should establish a new network of National Centres of Excellence in Low Carbon Skills at a number of further education colleges, each focusing on different aspects of the low carbon skills gap. The Centres of Excellence should be geographically spread to help with the levelling-up agenda, based on regional hubs that could be linked to existing regional Just Transition projects. Collectively the network will lead on designing new teaching resources, training and assessments, as well as reskilling teachers and sharing best practice. These centres would also support the government with incorporating low carbon skills into the curriculum to help further bridge the skills gap further at a time when many students face a highly uncertain future.

To combat climate change, we need our young people to leave formal education equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to help contribute to solutions and

make Britain a more sustainable country. It's clear that this isn't happening at the moment as we have found that: 42% of young people aged 9-18 say they have learnt a little, hardly anything or nothing about the environment at school and 75% of teachers feel they haven't received adequate training to educate students about climate change.

We recommend that the government ensures that students are prepared to face the effects of climate change and are taught to understand the solutions by implementing a Climate Emergency Education Act. This is inspired by the US Defence Education Act - the huge, ultimately successful, investment in their Education system on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) as part of the space race. This act would sit above various pieces of existing education and ensure that sustainability and climate change are embedded in all subject areas across all levels of education. It would ensure that educators are trained in how to teach these difficult topics in a way that empowers students and would allocate the funding and resources needed to do this.

We hope you agree that education is key to combatting climate change and urge you to consider implementing these changes, or a review into climate education, in the lead up to COP26.

From,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Brindle', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval shape.

Joe Brindle
Teach the Future, Founder

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jo Grady', written in a cursive style.

Jo Grady
University and College Union, General Secretary

Kevin Courtney

Kevin Courtney
National Education Union, Joint General Secretary

Larissa Kennedy

Larissa Kennedy
National Union of Students, President

Mary W. Boustead

Mary Boustead
National Education Union, Joint General Secretary

<https://sustainability.nus.org.uk/our-research/our-research-reports/schools-and-sustainability>
<https://www.aldersgategroup.org.uk/events/skilling-up-the-uk-for-the-21st-century>